

Litherland Moss Children's Centre

201 Moss Lane, Litherland, Liverpool, Liverpool, Merseyside, L21 7NW

Inspection dates	1–2 July 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Requires improvement	3
The quality of practice and services		Requires improvement	3
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- The local authority does not provide wholly accurate data about the reach area and the centre does not have an accurate analysis of how many families, including those most in need, use the centre's services.
- Health outcomes relating to breastfeeding, smoking and obesity for children entering Reception Year are not yet good and show little sign of improvement. Data from health partners are not up-to-date.
- The quality of observation, planning and assessment of children's development and the tracking of adult learning are inconsistent across the centre's services and so outcomes are not as good as they could be.
- Partnerships with schools and other early years settings in the reach are not fully developed. Information about children's learning and development is not shared well enough between providers and centre staff to show the impact the centre has made on children's progress from children's starting points.
- Targets set by leaders and managers are not specific or easily measured. As a result the advisory board and governing body can only partially monitor the full impact of the centre's work and challenge the centre's effectiveness.
- The quality and rigour of the monitoring of case files and staff practice by leaders are not robust enough to ensure the centre's provision is of high quality.

This centre has the following strengths:

- Outreach work by staff is good and they are well known in the community. A high proportion of the reach area is registered with the centre.
- Child-protection concerns are dealt with quickly.
- The take-up of funded childcare places for children under five years of age is high.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Improve access to services by:
 - more effectively monitoring and increasing engagement rates, especially for lone parents, families from workless households and fathers so that the large majority of target groups are accessing services.
- Improve the quality and practice of the centre's provision on health outcomes, school readiness and adult learning success by:
 - gaining accurate health data and working with partners to increase the percentage of mothers who continue to breastfeed, reduce the proportion of mothers smoking throughout pregnancy and reduce obesity rates of children entering Reception Year
 - further developing partnerships with schools and providers of early education to improve data sharing so the centre can show the difference it is making to narrow the achievement gap for children in the most deprived areas so that children are ready to start their school education
 - ensuring that the planning of activities and services and the observation and assessment of children and families are consistent across the centre's services.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership, governance and management by:
 - working more closely with the local authority to gain accurate reach area population data on identified target groups and monitoring more accurately the uptake of services in order to plan future provision more effectively
 - setting specific and measurable targets by which the advisory board and governing body can more effectively challenge and hold the centre to account for the impact of its work
 - improving the quality and rigour of the monitoring of staff practice, staff supervision and auditing of case files to ensure good practice is continually developed and areas to improve identified.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with centre parents, staff, members of the advisory board and governing body, representatives from health partners, early years and adult education providers, volunteers and officers from the local authority.

The inspectors visited three sessions held during the inspection at the centre and also at its satellite centre at Hatton Hill: 'Baby Weigh-in', 'Start Right' and 'Midweek Playgroup'.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation. Inspectors took into account parents' views as expressed during the inspection, as well as through recorded evaluations of the centre's work and a review of the centre's most recent parent satisfaction surveys.

Inspection team

Emily Wheeldon, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Philip David Ellwand	Additional inspector
Tara Street	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Litherland Moss Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre situated in the Litherland area of Liverpool and based on two sites. The main site is shared with Litherland Moss Primary School and its satellite centre is attached to Hatton Hill Primary School. The centre offers a range of services, which include childcare provision, targeted parenting programmes, focused play sessions, child health services, adult education and outreach services. The centre is managed by the school on behalf of the local authority. The governing body and advisory board oversee the work of the centre. The centre manager receives line management from the deputy headteacher of the school.

There are 1,121 children under five years of age in the reach area, of which 42% live in the top 10% and 20% most deprived in the country. Unemployment is above the national average and 32% of families are dependent on workless benefits. There is a mixture of privately owned, private rental and social housing. Most families living within the reach area are of White British heritage and a small proportion belong to minority ethnic groups. Children enter early years provision with skills that are well below those typical for their age. Onsite provision includes Litherland Moss Primary School and childcare provision situated within the children's centre. These provisions are subject to separate inspection arrangements and the reports are available on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. Target groups include families living in the area of most deprivation, lone parents, fathers and workless families and children aged two years who are eligible for free entitlement to early years education.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The number of families registered with the centre is high. However, engagement from fathers, lone parents and families from workless households remains low. The centre monitors access to services; however, given the inconsistencies in data, systems to monitor who uses the centre services, and how often they use them are not robust enough.
- The very large majority of eligible two- three- and four-year-olds take up the free entitlement to early education in a range of good and better childcare provision in the area. This is due to the concerted effort of centre staff to encourage and support families to take up their place.
- Children with communication skills that are below those typical for their age are identified early by staff. As a result, referrals to external agencies, such as speech therapists, are swift, and children receive access to additional support in a timely manner.
- The centre's family development workers are well known by families who live in the most deprived areas and find it difficult to engage. Staff regularly visit families and quickly build positive relationships. As a result, these families feel more comfortable about sharing their concerns and accessing services. Therefore, they are enabled to have the same access to services as other families.
- Families who attend the centre, including those who receive home visits, are positive about the work of the centre and express good levels of satisfaction with the activities offered. However, the centre does not have a reliable picture of who is benefitting from regular access to its services, including those families and parents most in need.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Staff are well qualified and plan resources and activities in group sessions based on the known needs of the families who attend regularly. However, for the mid-week playgroup, activities are not sufficiently well planned to promote learning, including how parents can best support their child's learning during play. Staff do not record observations of development, assess or monitor progress for each child who attends activities. As a result they cannot ensure that these children make at

least good progress from their starting points.

- Partnerships with the two co-located schools are good. Information sharing about the progress made by the children who attend these schools is strong and gaps in attainment are identified and supported. However, links with other schools and early years settings across the reach are less well developed. As a result, support for transition and school readiness for these children is not as good. Consequently, the centre cannot demonstrate the impact it has on all children living across the reach area.
- Many children, particularly those living in the most deprived areas, achieve a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, not enough emphasis is put on narrowing the gap in achievement and reducing inequalities. This is because the centre does not know how well the children known to be eligible for free school meals achieve compared to their peers.
- The centre works well with adult learning partners, such as 'Sefton at Work', to enable easy access to information, advice and guidance on employment. In one programme, 'Moving Forward', there is good tracking of learners' existing skills and learning successes. However, this system is not used more widely across all courses. The centre does not routinely collate or analyse data, and so does not know whether the needs of those who attend adult learning courses have been effectively met.
- The centre does not always receive timely, accurate and up-to-date health data to enable leaders to assess health trends effectively. This makes it difficult to set specific targets within the development plan and monitor the progress towards these targets. As a result, although health outcomes are improving, there is still more to be done. The percentage of mothers continuing to breastfeed at six-to-eight weeks, is low at 23.9%; smoking during pregnancy is high at 15.8%; the number of children in Reception Year who are obese is not decreasing and remains at 12%.
- Family support work is of good quality and case files show timely interventions for those accessing this service. For example, the centre and its key partners provide effective care, guidance and support, such as debt advice, to families. Where a need for specific support is identified, the family support worker ensures that families receive the correct help to make positive changes to their lives.
- Staff support and value the centre users who choose to contribute to the centre by working as volunteers and/or be members of the parents' forum. Users describe how this work improves their confidence and self-esteem, and for some this experience has enabled them to return to paid employment.
- Families appreciate the trusted support they receive from the centre. They comment on how this has helped to improve their parenting skills. One family described how sensitively centre staff guided them after an early recognition of their child's disability. The support they received gave them a better understanding of the issues involved in supporting their child's development and they commented positively on the good progress their child has made.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The local authority and some partners provide suitable data about the reach area to support the centre's planning of services. However, information about the number of families in the reach who need the most help is not always reliable. Consequently, leaders and managers are unable to use information to accurately analyse what proportion of the families, including those most in need, are accessing services.
- The centre manager is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and governing body of the school. Together they show passionate determination to steer the centre in the right direction. This can be evidenced by a significant rise in the number of registrations. However, more work needs to be undertaken to embed high-quality monitoring systems of staff's work to improve the quality of provision for families. For example, the monitoring of case files and supervision of staff is not rigorous enough.
- The centre's leaders and those responsible for governing the centre have a realistic overview of the centre's performance. However, the centre's self-evaluation and development plan lack precision as the targets set are not specific enough. Consequently, the advisory board and governing body are

not in a strong enough position to challenge and hold the centre to account for the impact of its work.

- The centre meets well its obligations in ensuring the safeguarding of children, staff and centre users. For example, thorough processes of recording vetting checks and verifying information is in place to ensure the suitability of all staff and partners working with them. Staff and partner agencies know the needs of individual families and work well together to meet their needs. The Common Assessment Framework is used effectively in supporting families. High priority is given to looked-after children and children subject to a child-protection plan.
- The centre provides good opportunities for families to evaluate and influence the activities and sessions they and their children attend. In addition, the recent rejuvenation of the group for parents to contribute their views has resulted in an active number of parents who are keen to voice their ideas and suggestions.
- Resources are prioritised well to meet the needs of families who require additional support, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff are experienced and suitably trained in specific areas to meet the diverse needs of the community. For example, staff have received additional training in delivering parenting programmes and in using positive strategies to manage children's behaviour. These appropriately link to the centre's priorities to improve the well-being of families.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and, as a result, inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

Children's centre

Unique reference number	21802
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	442878
Managed by	The governing body of Litherland Moss Primary School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1121
Centre leader	Jacqui Marsh
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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